2023 MISTLETOE MISSIVE

*Celebrating **30 YEARS** of "All the news that fits" - Enlightening YOU since 1993*

I can't believe this is the THIRTIETH year for my year-end newsletter! I wish I had all the past editions, but alas, the earliest years were lost long ago. I banged out the premiere edition for Christmas the first year after I left my gummint job and returned to Iowa using my trusty, no-name, beige box 386 (if you understand that reference, you too are *OLD*!) But you don't care about any of that, you want to know what happened THIS year. Sooo, set back, grab a snack & "beverage of your choice" and get ready for a not-so-quick, but **highly entertaining** 2023 in review.

January… The year began cold and slow, like molasses in…

February… found Dick & I, along with my college roommates & respective spouses, in Des Moines for the fourth or fifth year (I've lost count!) participating in the Cardinal & Gold Gala, a fundraiser for ISU student scholarships. Later in the month, wanting to get away from the cold, we jetted off to Florida for a quick 5 day stay with local friends Ken & Tom who have a second home in Pompano Beach. The weather was gorgeous, unseasonably warm even and… I got sick the first night there! Dick and friends carried on with vacation activities, but I stayed at the house most days feeling good enough to get in their pool, but little else. Still, it was nice to get out of the cold and I did enjoy the pool time.

March… ing forth, Dick celebrated his 38th year as an attorney with Lane & Waterman (L&W) having reached the very tip-top of the letterhead (the letterhead thing actually happened last year, but I digress.) And me? I got sick, again! Unrelated to the Florida illness (a UTI), mid-month I spent a day and a half in the hospital with a nasogastric tube in, afflicted with a partial small bowel obstruction. As they say, "this too, shall come to pass" and it did (double entendre intended). If it hadn't they were talking surgery, YIKES! The cause was unknown and I don't care to ever repeat that; all back to normal a week later.

April… showers, bring… **May…** Flowers. Spring plantings began, flowerbeds tended, summer was fast approaching (but not fast enough for me!) In May we had an opportunity to drive to Topeka, Kansas, to visit travel friends Doug & Richard and attend a fabulous "Doug Dinner party"… the guy is a *great* cook! The trip was initiated by the visit of another travel friend, David, formerly of Kansas, who was back for a short visit. I ended the month attending yet another food-activity. This time a luncheon thrown by my cousin Corrine in honor of her mother's birthday, my Aunt Gloria. We sat

around the dinner table and reminisced about playing as kids on their farm as well as overnight stays with Grandma & Grandpa Marshall on their farm. We all agreed, it was way more fun to be young kids with no responsibilities than adults with them!

June… had us preparing to host a L&W firm function at our home. The firm throws a party every year to welcome the summer clerks (law students who intern for the summer.) It gave me an excuse to tidy things up around the house and yard. It is a catered event, but we still had to prepare the surroundings and setup tables, chairs, etc., for the approximately 40-50 guests in attendance. Ours was a much smaller event compared to a…

July… wedding! On July 1st, we were in Austin, Texas, celebrating the nuptials of our nephew Kyle (Dick's sister Dee Ann and her husband Jim's youngest) to his now wife, Emily. Dick practiced his "travel agent" skills arranging travel for us and his parents, Jim & Alice, to get us all down to Austin. Dick then played chauffer not only to the four of us, but also Alice's brother and sister-in-law, Mike & Sylvia, also in attendance. Carting us around to meals, wedding related activities and transport to & from airports! After all of that, Dick needed a *real* vacation!

August… 11th found us in the car on the way to O'Hare Airport, in route to Ireland for that *real* vacation. This marked the first time for EITHER of us; not so amazing for me, but much more so for Dick… he's been *everywhere!* The bulk of our time was spent in Dublin and surrounding area, but we did venture north to Belfast, Northern Ireland for a couple days, the impetus of which was to see the Titanic Museum there. In case you're not up on your Titanic history, Belfast was where the ship was built. And the hotel where we stayed in Belfast is actually in the former office building of the Harland & Wolff shipyards, the builders of Titanic! Ireland is beautiful and GREEN, just like everyone says.

(Clockwise, starting top-left: Mark in front of Titanic Museum; central campus Trinity College, Dublin; Dick at Hillsborough, Royal Residence in Northern Ireland; State ballroom, Dublin Castle; Mark & Dick at Newgrange Prehistoric Site, County Meath; and the tour line in front of the Guiness Storehouse, Dublin)

September… After a busy summer, the early fall was a nice respite. I have finally gotten to the point of referring to myself as "retired", but I do still take the occasional call from a select few who are in "I.T. distress." On one such "house call" my skills were so outstanding and appreciated so much that I was presented with a trophy! You may have heard of it, I think they said it's known as The Heisman! And before you ask, yes, it is real! Not really heavy, but kinda bulky, maybe they should give this to like athletes, rather than I.T. people, just sayin'! Dick's cousin Allen came through town and stayed with us for a night during the month, it was fun to catch up with him as he lives in Nevada and we don't get to see him as much as Dick's other more "local" cousins.

October… was a somber month. October 1st marked the passing of Dick's dad, Jim Davidson, at the age of 94. Jim lived a full life and he had the stories to back it up. He is sadly missed.

November… Dick continues to play in the Bettendorf Park Band (recently re-branded as the Bettendorf Community Band). He also played at Festival of Trees in Davenport with another group, and the Clarinet Christmas Choir, a yet third group of musicians. I started playing Euchre (cards) twice a month with friends in a tournament format. ("I'm shocked, shocked to find that gambling is going on in here!" – a line from 1942's Casablanca). We spent this Thanksgiving with Dick's Mom and his aunt, uncle and cousins in Manchester, Iowa, and then turned around and hosted a belated Thanksgiving dinner here at home on Sunday with my Mom, brother Doug, Aunt Gloria, cousins Corine & Dino, and Dino's youngest son Jacob. That'll be enough turkey for a year! As November came to a close, I put a dent in hauling leaves to the compost facility. I say "dent" because I did more in December and will have to do even more in the spring. November saw 14 truckloads of mulched leaves carted away!

December… and two MORE loads of leaves, but who's counting? (I am! *Sixteen!*) Now the stockings are hung by the chimney with care (literally), the tree is up, the garland displayed on the stairway railings and the windows are lit with "candles". We have a few holiday parties to attend and we look forward to seeing as many friends and family as time allows during the Christmas / New Years holiday period. And with that I will put a bow on this! Until next year, wishing you all…

A Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year!

Mark & Dick